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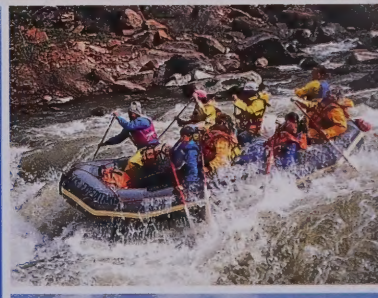
A Desktop Reference Guide to Collaborative, Community-Based Planning



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

SONORAN INSTITUTE

A collaborative project between
the Bureau of Land Management and the Sonoran Institute

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A Desktop Reference Guide to Collaborative, Community-Based Planning

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Acknowledgements

"I am tremendously proud of the BLM because it was the first public land management agency to embrace collaborative decision-making."

– Frank Gregg, former BLM bureau chief

The Bureau of Land Management and the Sonoran Institute would like to thank all of the participants who attended the Tucson workshop that formed the basis of the *Desktop Reference Guide*. We would also like to thank those people who were unable to participate in the workshop itself, but reviewed drafts of the publication. We are particularly grateful to the staff of the BLM Tucson Field Office for co-sponsoring the workshop, which included an inspiring tour of the Empire-Cienega Resource Conservation Area.

Jenny Grossenbacher was largely responsible for the planning and execution of the workshop; she also assisted in the organization and writing of this report. We appreciate her patience, persistence, and attention to detail.

Finally, we would like to give special thanks to Frank Gregg, BLM bureau chief from 1977 to 1980 and current SI board chairman, for providing a lively and inspiring evening discussion for the workshop participants.

Ann Aldrich
Group Manager,
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Bureau of Land Management

Ray Rasker
Director,
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Foreward

For years, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has experimented with collaborative approaches to planning and land stewardship. BLM field personnel work closely with diverse groups and individuals throughout the West to establish a sense of shared responsibility and stewardship for the land. These efforts are often long-term and labor-intensive. Working at scales appropriate to the community and the landscape, BLM employees engage local residents with a passion for the land and their community, while simultaneously recognizing that these are public lands, managed under national standards and laws in the interests of all Americans. It is hard work and often rewarding. It is also a delicate balancing act.

Community members—including ranchers, elected officials, conservationists, retirees, recreationists, and others—have helped to drive this new collaborative emphasis. They too have experimented and learned along the way. Although some efforts have fallen short of expectations, others have been successful, resulting in improved land conditions; increased trust between BLM land managers and the public; and management plans that are partially developed by the community, instilling a sense of ownership and responsibility.

Collaboration—a cooperative process in which interested parties, often with widely varied interests, work together to seek solutions with broad support for managing public and other lands. This may or may not involve an agency as a cooperating agency.

Collaborative Partnerships and Collaborative Stewardship—people working together, sharing knowledge and resources, to achieve desired outcomes for public lands and communities within statutory and regulatory frameworks.

— draft *BLM Land Use Planning Handbook*

This shift, away from the agency as "expert" and toward shared learning, trust, and responsibility represents a fundamental change in the way public lands are managed. The rewards of effective collaborative efforts are substantial and, for many within the BLM, this approach is at the same time thrilling, risky, and rewarding.

This *Desktop Reference Guide* is the result of a two-day workshop hosted by the BLM Tucson Field Office and the Sonoran Institute (SI). It is part of a long-term cooperative effort between the BLM and SI to build capacity within the agency and communities adjoining public lands to effectively participate in community-based land management planning. Participants included BLM field personnel from around the West with extensive experience in collaborative approaches to land management. They came to tell their stories, to share what works and what doesn't, and to develop recommendations for effective collaboration.

This *Guide* is for BLM field personnel—the men and women who live close to the resource, are active members of their communities, and wish to benefit from the experiences of others. The last section of this *Guide* lists the workshop attendees, as well as others who could not attend the gathering, but reviewed the draft and can act as mentors. Feel free to contact them for advice, and to share personal experiences and lessons.

Lee Nellis

Empire-Cienega Resource Conservation Area, Arizona

Workshop Description

The BLM Tucson Field Office and SI hosted the workshop in April, 2000, at the Tanque Verde Ranch adjacent to Saguaro National Park—a perfect setting to discuss the need for partnerships between public land managers and neighboring communities. The workshop culminated with a field trip to the Empire-Cienega Resource Conservation Area (RCA) in the Sonoita Valley, south of Tucson. The Empire-Cienega RCA is an ideal example of successful collaborative planning between the BLM and the Sonoita Valley Planning Partnership (discussed later in this publication).

The purpose of the workshop was both novel and straightforward: to harvest the experiences of participants in order to assess what works and what doesn't, and what changes are needed to foster effective collaboration between the BLM and its partners. Specifically, the objectives were to:

1. Develop a quick, easy-to-read reference guide on principles for effective collaborative, community-based planning.
2. Improve information about the tools, techniques, and strategies for developing and implementing effective collaborative, community-based planning.
3. Compile and distribute a list of contact names for mentoring and information sharing within the BLM.

To meet these goals, discussions were structured to address these three topics:

1. Collect and share recent experiences within the BLM regarding the development of effective collaborative, community-based planning efforts.
2. Identify and develop key principles that will guide BLM personnel in collaborative planning.
3. Develop recommendations to encourage effective collaborative, community-based planning.

"It's all about building relationships."
– Dave Kauffman

Guiding Principles for Successful Collaboration

The Seven Principles of Successful Collaboration

1. Build Lasting Relationships
2. Agree Upon the Legal Sideboards Early On
3. Encourage Diverse Participation and Communication
4. Work at an Appropriate Scale
5. Empower the Group
6. Share the Resources and the Rewards
7. Build Internal Support

The BLM field personnel gathered in Tucson identified several guiding principles of collaboration—call them the seven habits of effective collaboration. They also emphasized that no one recipe works in all instances. Everyone agreed to one essential message: When using community-based approaches to planning and land stewardship, remain flexible and recognize that every situation is different. Also, understand that there are limitations to collaborative approaches.

The principles below are offered as a synopsis of that day's discussion:

1 BUILD LASTING RELATIONSHIPS

Successful collaboration requires a substantial investment in building lasting relationships with neighbors, community leaders, interested groups, and individuals. Inclusiveness is the cornerstone of developing trust and building credibility with partners. Informal, one-on-one dialogue is essential to creating a safe and friendly environment that encourages everyone to participate.

Connecting with people outside of formal meetings and processes is essential and often overlooked. It helps engage those who would not normally come to meetings and prevents one interest or individual from dominating. Field trips help people to connect to the land as well as to each other. Many recognized that the investment of time and resources involved in building relationships is different and less tangible than creating a plan or implementing a project. They agreed, however, that the investment was well worth the effort.

Some tips to help build relationships: (1) Develop trust and credibility by becoming involved in the community outside of the role as a public land manager. (2) Make use of festivals and other informal events as a way to bring people together. For example, the San Miguel Watershed Coalition traces its origins to an "ideas festival" in 1992, sponsored by the nonprofit Telluride Institute. The festival brought together members of the community, including the BLM, to discuss water and watershed issues, using the arts, music, food, and talks as a fun way to encourage broad participation. (3) Celebrate successes, even small ones, to maintain group motivation, involvement, and focus.

"We have in place all the laws, policies, and regulations. The challenge is to engage the public."

– Jesse Juen

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Male sage grouse

The Gunnison Basin Sage Grouse Conservation Plan,
Gunnison Basin, Colorado

Beginning in the early 1990s, people around Gunnison began to worry about the declining populations and long-term survival of the sage grouse. As Dave Kauffman of the Montrose BLM office points out, "Sometimes people are brought together by fear. In the case of sage grouse in Gunnison, it was the fear of having the bird listed—so it was fear of the Endangered Species Act and enforcement of the act by the US Fish and Wildlife Service." While fear can sometimes polarize a community, in this case it resulted in the formation of a forward-thinking coalition of diverse citizens who worked together to develop a habitat management plan.

"The community wanted to be in charge and that's why they developed the Sage Grouse Conservation Plan. The USFWS okayed the plan, but then the community had to realize that they also had the responsibility to implement the plan. In this case the responsibilities were non-regulatory and voluntary."

– Dave Kauffman

The process was helped along by the fact that the responsible BLM employee, Dave Kauffman, had built lasting relationships through participating in the community. He was involved in a variety of issues, even some not directly related to public land management. Dave Kauffman notes: "At first I thought 'what do I care about affordable housing? It has nothing to do with the mission of the BLM.' But, by being involved in my community I was able to build trust, and this made a big difference later on the ground."

In 1995, a habitat-protection initiative was started when the Gunnison Resource Area of the BLM invited a variety of groups and individuals to meet and discuss the status and potential future of the Gunnison sage grouse. Within a month, participants representing the Black Canyon Audubon Society, BLM, Colorado Division of Wildlife, Gunnison County Planning Commission, Gunnison County Stockgrowers, Gunnison County Weed Commission, High Country Citizens' Alliance, Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. National Park Service, and several individuals from the general public formed a core group (15-25 individuals) that began working on strategies to increase sage grouse populations in the Gunnison Basin. The goal of the Gunnison Sage Grouse Working Group was to create a conservation plan that would increase the sage grouse population. The working group identified forty-two factors that may have contributed to the sage grouse decline and developed more than 200 conservation actions to help reverse the decline.

"It's about respecting and understanding each other while working toward a new relationship with the land. But we also need to operate within the law. Part of our job is to help people understand those laws and how to comply with them."

— Gary McVicker

2 AGREE UPON THE LEGAL SIDEBOARDS EARLY ON

Field personnel must be clear about the "decision space" within which a collaborative group functions, and the laws and regulations that guide federal land management. Consequently, group members need to learn about the legal mandates agencies must uphold, including the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). In addition, agency personnel need to be clear when federal law requires them to maintain decision-making authority. As Dave Krosting, Lemhi BLM Field Office in Idaho, observed: "The key is to leave the decision-making *process* in the hands of the community, but not the decision-making *authority*." Many of the participants have learned to communicate the essential but subtle difference between responsibility and authority. While it is possible to share the decision-making responsibility with collaborative partners, the authority always stays with the agency.

The 'Inimim Forest Plan, Folsom Field Office, California

John Scull

Shield's Camp meadow

In Northern California, the rural-residential community of Nevada County came together to write its own forest management plan for the public lands adjacent to their homes. They wanted to reduce the potential for catastrophic wildfire, re-establish an old growth forest environment, and cultivate a sustainable yield of high-quality timber—of particular interest to local members of the Timber Framers Guild of North America.

"We told the community 'if you don't like the way BLM is managing, then write up your own plan, and present it to us. If it is consistent with federal law and policy, we'll adopt it as our own.'"

— John Scull

The community established the non-profit Yuba Watershed Institute to implement the five-year plan. Local citizens became the experts, developing sixteen forest management principles and a timber-management plan with a 200-year cycle. The BLM clarified its sideboards up front to make it clear that they retained management authority. The BLM did the Environmental Assessment with help from the community and the plan went through the NEPA process.

This example illustrates two key principles of a successful collaborative. First, be clear about the legal sideboards and, second, operate at an appropriate scale (at 1,800 acres, the 'Inimim Forest Plan was "almost like a neighborhood improvement association").

3 ENCOURAGE DIVERSE PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNICATION

Ensuring broad participation in a collaborative effort requires talking to a variety of people in a community and with an interest in the particular area. Workshop participants recommended the following techniques to help promote diverse participation and effective communication:

- Identify the "movers and shakers" in the community, which often is not limited to elected officials.
- Learn the informal networks and how information flows within them. Identify the informal leaders of the community.
- Involve tribal, state, and local governments early in the process.
- Hold meetings in different places and at different times. Outdoor social events, such as raft trips and picnics, encourage people to bring their families. Engage them as neighbors rather than representatives of stakeholder groups. Organize field trips to encourage people to connect with the land.
- Widely circulate a newsletter, minutes from the meetings, or other outreach materials in order to communicate with everyone, even those who do not attend the meetings. Make use of phone trees to encourage participation in meetings.
- Involve regional and national interest groups early in the process.
- Answer phone calls and e-mails promptly (i.e., within twenty-four hours).

"WEED" Theater

National Rural Development Council

One way to involve the public in a non-threatening fashion is through the arts. Together with the Colorado Ecosystem Partnership (a coalition of state and federal land management agencies in Colorado working to support community-based stewardship), the Colorado Rural Development Council (CRDC) contracted to have a play written about the complexity of public land management. The playwright spent considerable time traveling the West and interviewing people before writing the play. She chose a BLM field office manager as the central character. According to those who have seen early readings of the play, it very accurately portrays typical issues and problems surrounding public land management. The play is to be presented to rural communities in a manner that promotes a more objective understanding of these issues, and the differing attitudes surrounding them. After each performance a facilitated discussion will be held with the audience. The same process has been successfully used to engage community-wide dialogue on such topics as teen pregnancy and drugs. The play is entitled "WEED." The Creede Repertory Theater is now scheduling performances in a number of communities in Colorado, Idaho, and Arizona.

"Listen to the locals. They'll get involved, but only at a certain scale. In a sense, everyone has a home range."
—Dave Kauffman

4 WORK AT AN APPROPRIATE SCALE

The scales at which collaborative efforts may succeed differ widely. The key is to work at a scale appropriate to the community and to its sense of place—even if the "right" scale may be larger from a scientific perspective. Decisions need to be at the appropriate scale in terms of shared values. In some cases the watershed is the appropriate scale, and in others it may be smaller or larger, depending on the community's sense of identity with the land.

In some cases, a collaborative approach may not be the appropriate tool to address a particular land management issue. Participants stressed the importance of understanding the limits of collaborative approaches.

San Miguel Watershed Coalition, Southwest Colorado, near Telluride

The San Miguel Watershed Coalition is an example of a collaborative effort at the appropriate scale. The mission of the Coalition is "to preserve and enhance one of the few relatively undisturbed river systems and some of the most beautiful lands in the world." The Coalition developed a plan that gives guidance, provides a menu of potential actions, and is voluntary and non-regulatory. So far this process has led to numerous changes, including improved visitor services and safety; more input from the public on recreation needs and planning of new facilities; and combined hydrology studies and jointly-funded vegetation treatment projects, which led to increases in resource protection. The effort has resulted in more funding, more involvement, and increased trust and strengthened partnerships.

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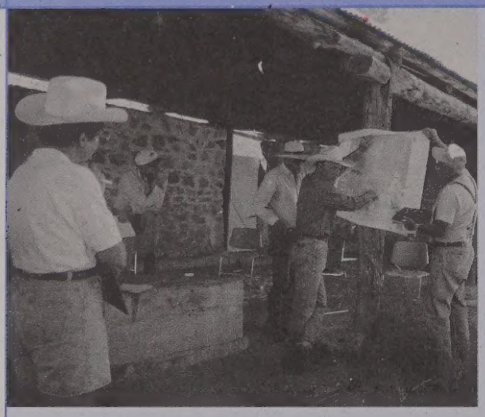
San Miguel Mountains

"BLM's position from the onset was that the watershed plan would conform to the BLM's Land Use Plan. We told them 'we want to help you, just don't break the law.'"
– Dave Kauffman

"The Interior Columbia River Basin Environmental Management Project (ICBEMP) is an effort that involves over sixty million acres of public land, five federal agencies, twenty-two tribes, and over eighty counties. The key to reaching the project's goals will rest on the ability to build collaborative efforts at the community level."
— Jim Owings

"I have a strong personal belief that this is the right approach to land-use planning on public lands. After all, we are the stewards of these lands for the public, and it is appropriate that we try and get the public involved in their management to the greatest extent possible."

— Karen Simms



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Community meeting

The Sonoita Valley Planning Partnership, Sonoita, Arizona.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) directs that to the fullest extent possible federal agencies shall encourage and facilitate public involvement in decisions that affect the quality of the human environment. Traditionally, BLM and other agencies have included the public in planning at the initial scoping stage, and then "disappeared" until ready to ask for comments on a draft plan. This creates the impression that comments were ignored, and consequently fosters a lack of trust in the agencies and outcomes.

In 1995, the BLM's Tucson Field Office decided to take a new, collaborative approach to completing the land-use planning needed to guide management of 45,000 acres of public land within the Empire-Cienega Resource Conservation Area. The intent was to do so with full public participation, in a way that truly empowered a diverse local group. As the BLM's Karen Simms said: "My manager had a vision of an open public process, to recognize that our agency is just another member of a larger community. I think that vision and support has been vital to our success." This effort led to the formation of the Sonoita Valley Planning Partnership (SVPP).

The mission of the Sonoita Valley Planning Partnership is to "work together to perpetuate naturally functioning ecosystems while preserving the rural, grassland character of the Sonoita Valley for future generations." The Partnership is a voluntary association of agencies, organized groups, and individuals who share a common interest in achieving community-oriented resolutions to local and national issues affecting public lands within the Sonoita Valley.

While the Sonoita Valley still retains wide open spaces, rural lifestyles and values, and a great variety of plant communities and wildlife, it is within an hour of the rapidly growing Tucson metropolitan area and therefore vulnerable to the impacts of rapid growth and intensifying conflicts at the urban-rural interface. To address these concerns, the SVPP developed a shared vision, goals, and desired future conditions and specific objectives for the Sonoita Valley. The group reached consensus on a preferred management alternative, which the BLM incorporated as the foundation for the Empire-Cienega Resource Conservation Area's Integrated Management Plan.

5 EMPOWER THE GROUP

Agency personnel must be willing to accept the outcome of a collaborative process and must share responsibility with the public, both for planning and for implementing the plan. A strong word of caution came from many participants: "Do not empower people and then take that power away. Distrust does not fade quickly or easily."

Many noted that the role of BLM personnel in collaborative processes is often to participate as an equal partner in the process, helping to keep the process open and inclusive so that everyone feels equally empowered. The process has to start with the people of the community, rather than originate with or be driven by the agency.

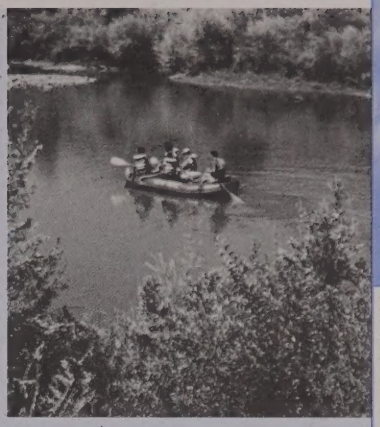
Agency personnel should avoid the temptation to control a collaborative process. A collaborative group should define its own decision-making process including ground rules for operation. In collaborative processes, the BLM's role shifts from convener and manager to information provider and contributor. As one participant noted, "One way to measure success is to note how the pronouns change from 'me' and 'I' to 'us' and 'we.'"

At the same time, it was also clarified that there is a

fine line between empowering the group and making sure that the sideboards are clearly specified. Appendix A (*Guide to Collaborative Planning*) of the draft *BLM Land Use Planning Handbook* outlines the benefits of collaboration, including improved decision-making, better leveraging of resources, and improved relationships. However, the *Handbook* also makes it clear that "the BLM retains the decision-making authority for all decisions on BLM lands."

Some helpful tips for empowering a diverse group, and developing a shared understanding of conditions, include: (1) Offering training events to provide the group with common knowledge and vocabulary; (2) Hosting guest speakers, often scientists, who are trusted by the group and can help build a common knowledge base and; (3) Covering a wide array of issues, including social, ecological, and economic elements. This will allow for participation from many in the group rather than only the agency representatives.

Rio Grande Resource Management Plan,
Taos, New Mexico



Lower Gorge of the Rio Grande River

"It was very powerful for the BLM manager to turn the decision process over to the community and interest groups within agency parameters."
– Steve Henke

As part of the Land Use Planning Process, the Taos BLM Field Office worked with commercial and private boaters, local residents, and agency personnel to obtain consensus on long-term planning for recreational floating on the Lower Gorge of the Rio Grande River.

Although the physical capacity of the river could accommodate a diversity of users, the "social capacity" was strained, with conflicts arising among user groups, boaters, and adjoining communities. The group developed a plan that would mitigate the impact on towns along the river by allocating rafting capacity between commercial and private boaters, and by developing monitoring strategies. With the knowledge that their consensus recommendations would be included in the preferred alternative of the Resource Management Plan (RMP), the group was able to circumvent previously ingrained distrust and misperceptions to come together and create a compromise. By the BLM giving ownership to the people, polarity on the issue was greatly reduced.

Progress was fairly slow on this complex issue, yet morale and focus were maintained by striving for smaller and tangible interim successes. Early achievements of the group included boater education, increased respect for private property, and a reduction in conflicts. Ultimately the group agreed on a plan for boating limitations that varied by season, water level, and section of river. Their work, which serves as a case study in how to share the responsibility for a valuable resource, is reflected in the current RMP and is being implemented and adapted to the dynamic conditions of the river.

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BLM lands in eastern Oregon

"Leadership needs to come from below the power structure, but ideally the process needs to be supported by the power structure as well, in order to honor the group process."

– Dave Krosting

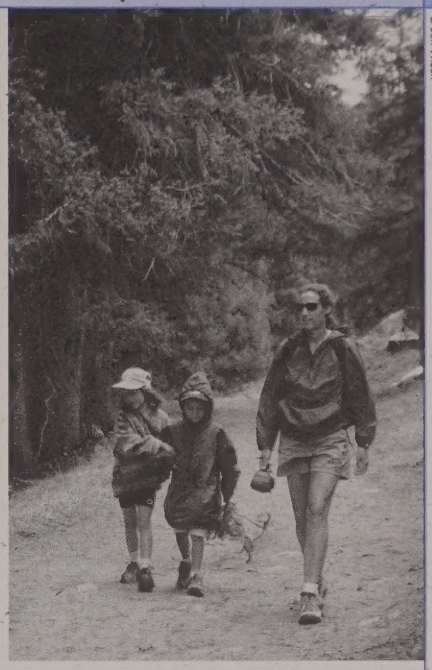
6 SHARE THE RESOURCES AND THE REWARDS

One of the benefits and guiding principles of collaboration is the sharing of resources and information that comes from working with many partners. It is essential that collaborative groups have access to the pertinent information needed to create a successful decision. This includes scientific, legal, and socio-economic information. Cast a wide net for outside help—you may be surprised at who will be willing to come to the group's assistance. Equally important is the sharing of the risks, responsibilities, and rewards of collaboration. Because collaboration requires a team effort, it is important to honor all those responsible for success.

7 BUILD INTERNAL SUPPORT

Collaborative approaches to land management require constant learning and adaptation. As a result, BLM personnel experimenting with collaboration need to also train colleagues and build support for the project within the agency. Workshop participants felt it essential to actively market collaborative projects early on to ensure that the budget process will enable the BLM to follow through with commitments made to partners. Building internal support will enable field personnel to take risks and share power with the collaborative group.

Building Effective Collaboration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Participants made several recommendations designed to make collaboration an integral part of BLM management practices. While the bulk of these refer specifically to the agency, it should be noted that parallel recommendations could also be made of non-governmental organizations, conservation groups, local governments, and other institutions involved in collaborative, community-based planning. While it is necessary for the collaborative efforts of the BLM to occur within certain sideboards, other organizations are similarly constrained. County governments, for example, also operate under their own state laws, rules, regulations, and budget constraints. Understanding each other's motivations and limitations is necessary for achieving effective collaborative efforts.

1 PERSONNEL AND TRAINING

"I've seen a lot of good people make efforts to make change. After they leave, their work is destroyed. If we want change to last, we need to work collaboratively. We can't do it by ourselves."

— Dave Krosting

Hire diverse personnel

One important way the BLM can create a shift in thinking towards collaborative, community-based approaches is to go to the core of the BLM, its personnel. To respond to the increased diversity in the public, the BLM's workforce also needs to diversify.

Reward experimentation and risk-taking

The BLM can boost collaborative approaches by rewarding personnel for their partnership traits such as risk-taking, relationship-building, flexibility, and a communal attitude. Staff should be evaluated—and rewarded—based on their success with collaborative approaches.

Train specifically for collaborative approaches

Training is essential to develop skills in collaborative planning and stewardship. New hires should be specially trained in the partnership philosophy. The BLM should encourage participation in training courses on community-based partnerships, such as those conducted through the Partnership Series at the National Training Center. Sharing of success stories within the agency—through videos, slide shows, a Web site on collaborative approaches, periodic gatherings, and workshops—is a very effective training method.

© Thane Haunz

Silver Saddle Ranch

Washoe County and Carson City, Nevada

Some of the most innovative collaborative initiatives are underway along Nevada's Sierra Front, out of the Carson City Field Office. They illustrate willingness on the part of the BLM to take a risk, to try something new, and to work cooperatively across public and private land boundaries. For example, the BLM and Carson City (which has a shared municipal and county government) combined public hearings and planning processes to arrive at a land-use plan that met the needs of both parties related to land disposals, acquisitions, recreation and public purpose lands, and the preservation of open space on public and private lands within Carson City.

The plan set the stage for the joint acquisition of the Silver Saddle Ranch, a 700-acre historic ranch on the outskirts of Carson City, straddling the Carson River. The city was concerned about the proposed development of a subdivision on the ranch that had previously been identified as open space. Carson City offered to buy the water rights if BLM acquired the property. The property was included in a land exchange in southern Nevada and acquired in 1997. BLM and the city are putting the final touches on a joint management plan for the ranch that emphasizes public access, the retention of key historic features, environmental education, interpretation, wildlife habitat, and hiking trails. The BLM is using the city's water rights to keep a haying operation on the ranch because the public wanted the lands to stay green and the BLM wanted the irrigation to maintain the wetland and riparian habitat values. When the city's growth requires this water for municipal purposes, city managers have committed to replace it with tertiary-treated effluent at their expense.

"We are initiating a new order of things in the BLM, fundamentally changing the way BLM does business. Bureaucracies are designed to reject change, and to create inertia. It therefore takes considerable professional risk to view things and do things differently. But the results for the land and natural resources for which we are responsible are positive, and the reaction of the public is positive, and that is all important."

— John Singlaub

A similar effort is underway in southern Washoe County (the Reno area) where the Carson City Field Office is participating in a joint planning effort with Washoe County to protect open space. As the region grapples with urban sprawl and development pressures, it is no longer in the public interest to dispose of BLM lands around Reno, as specified in the existing Resource Management Plan (RMP). The BLM has agreed to retain the lands it manages in public ownership to protect open space. Adjoining private lands needing protection were similarly identified through the county's own planning process. To reflect these changes, the BLM and the county are developing a plan that will amend both the Regional Master Plan and the RMP.

As urban development encroaches on BLM lands, there is also an increased need for law enforcement to reduce vandalism and regulate off-road vehicle use. As part of the joint planning process, and in response to concerns raised by the BLM, the Washoe County Sheriff's Department has committed to take a stronger role in law enforcement, and the county's Parks and Recreation Department will manage recreational use on these lands.

Elko, Nevada

BLM, Elko Field Office

Sage grouse habitat

Following a Partnership Training Series course hosted by the Elko and Battle Mountain BLM Field Offices, a broad-based community group was formed, called the Northeastern Nevada Stewardship Group (NNSG). The 100-member group—comprised of landowners, ranchers, university professors, agencies, and other local interested parties—focuses on science with an emphasis on such "emerging issues" as the decline of local sage grouse populations. Funding for NNSG is provided by the BLM, Forest Service, People for the USA, the state legislature, the Board of the Elko Grazing District, and three major Elko County gold mining companies.

NNSG sponsored training on the NEPA process to help educate the community on the sideboards and legal requirements for the management of public lands, sage grouse biology, and the natural science and history of the Great Basin area. A sage grouse subcommittee was subsequently formed to develop a joint habitat management plan with all area agencies and the NNSG. This planning process is now underway.

The Partnership Series Training Courses

The Partnership Series is a group of courses all related to the idea that a more efficient and effective way to manage natural resources is through partnerships between government, citizens, various interests, and communities. Courses are offered on the following topics:

Community-Based Partnerships and Ecosystems for a Healthy Environment

This course is offered at the community level. It is designed to promote an understanding of the concept of "community-based, collaborative stewardship" and seeks to establish new opportunities for government and communities to work together. The course defines "ecosystems" as being inclusive of the community, and seeks to find ways in which science, government, and citizens can work together to maintain healthy ecosystems.

Learning Community: People, Place, and Perspective

A continuation of the concepts introduced in the Community-Based Partnerships course, participants learn to identify formal and informal networks, gathering places, and human and cultural resources within a community. This knowledge will help to improve communication and trust between government and community to more effectively manage natural resources.

Community-Based Volunteering: Enhancing Land Stewardship through Innovative Partnerships

Discover how to plan, initiate, coordinate, and administer volunteer programs, including understanding the value of volunteers as a community resource for information and support.

Alternative Funding: Looking Beyond Traditional Sources

Develop creative, new ways to fund projects. Find out how to identify fundable projects, develop a comprehensive funding plan, and obtain resources through non-traditional funding channels.

For more information:

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Web site: www.ntc.blm.gov/partner

Larry Bauer

Partnership Series course, Tonapah, Nevada

Bio-Social Ecosystem Maps

The JKA Mapping Group, through an assistance agreement with the BLM, offers bio-social ecosystem maps. Designed to show how the West is defined culturally, they are available at two scales: Social Resource Unit (101 units) and Human Resource Unit (425 units). The boundaries of these units are different from administrative-jurisdictional boundaries, such as county and state lines.

The maps are used for comprehensive planning, strategic issue management, resource management plan revisions, collaborative watershed restoration projects, and other community-based partnerships. These maps clarify the social, cultural, and economic realities of a specific area and the physical resources that sustain it; simplify issues of concern to informal networks in the community; and help identify ways to communicate with different cultural groups.

The use of bio-social ecosystem maps is addressed in the Community-Based Partnerships course offered by the BLM-National Training Center. The maps will be available on-line soon.

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"Empowerment is very fragile. As a government agency, we can damage it very easily. We must learn to work in a manner that instills a sense of shared ownership and responsibility. Our programs, policies, and processes have not been designed to do that."

– Gary McVicker

2 PLANNING GUIDANCE

For some, regulations and planning requirements appear to be rigid and therefore inhibit collaboration. The Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), for example, is sometimes seen as an obstacle to collaborative approaches to planning. There is a genuine fear that agency personnel may be influenced by special interests, and sometimes the law is simply misinterpreted. Additionally, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is often viewed as a checklist of things to be done, with public participation just one of the items to be checked off.

BLM Planning

Workshop participants felt that field managers should be given latitude to determine planning in a manner that supports collaborative stewardship, in which areas this approach is appropriate, and that the planning process should be flexible. "Desired outcomes," often measured in terms of conditions of the land or productivity, should also include a sense of shared ownership, understanding, and responsibility.

Participants in the workshop who were closely involved in the re-write of the draft *BLM Land Use Planning Handbook* encouraged the use of multi-jurisdictional, collaborative approaches.

"While the ultimate responsibility regarding land-use plan decisions on BLM-administered lands rests with the BLM official, managers have discovered that individuals, communities, and governments working together toward commonly understood objectives yields a significant improvement in stewardship of public lands."

– draft *BLM Land Use Planning Handbook*

"In general, a collaborative group is not subject to FACA if the agency does not appoint members to, or retain strict control of, the group and if all meetings are totally open to the public. Also, if the collaborative group is a diverse collection of individuals who are providing their individual opinions, FACA does not apply."

— draft *BLM Land Use Planning Handbook*

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

What was intended as a law requiring governments and citizens to work together to attain the act's purposes has instead become a highly formal and legal process for government analysis and review. However, workshop participants stressed that NEPA can be used with collaborative stewardship to encourage greater citizen understanding, ownership, and responsibility for the environment.

Among other things, the purpose section of NEPA describes the need to achieve the "productive and enjoyable harmony between man (people) and his (their) environment, and to enrich the understanding of the ecological systems and natural resources important to the nation." Section 101 of the act declares that such harmony should be achieved "by the Federal Government, in cooperation with state and local governments, and other concerned public and private organizations, to use all practicable means and resources, including financial and technical assistance." In other words, collaborative approaches to planning and land stewardship are allowed—and encouraged—under NEPA. Finally, Section 101 recognizes that each person has a responsibility to contribute to the preservation and enhancement of the environment.

The Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA)

Agency personnel need to be clear about what can and cannot be done under FACA. The draft *BLM Land Use Planning Handbook* has a section explaining FACA, including an easy-to-read decision tree to simplify the compliance process.

Some workshop participants felt that the easiest way to comply with FACA is to make sure that the group was not initially formed by the agency and that the agency does not hold strict control over the group. This is also consistent with the principles of successful collaboratives, such as empowering the group and setting sideboards early on. These sideboards should include a discussion, or in some cases training, on what the BLM can and cannot do under federal law.

3 BUDGETS AND TIME ALLOCATIONS

Collaborative, community-based planning is an integral and increasingly recognized component of the mounting successes created by the BLM and the communities with whom they work. Workshop participants had several recommendations on how budgets and time allocations need to reflect collaborative efforts.

Budgets

Budget proposals and annual work plans should accommodate work associated with collaborative, community-based stewardship. The BLM has recently reengineered its internal budgeting procedures and is in the process of implementing the changes. Specifically, the new budgeting procedures are designed to: encourage people to prepare for long-term projects, focus on achieving results in specific geographic areas, and encourage talking with partners about funding capabilities and limitations. The procedures are also designed to be more transparent than in the past.

In spite of these improvements, workshop participants felt that the current budget process constrains collaborative work and landscape-level thinking. A possible explanation for this is that implementation of the new internal budgeting procedures varies depending on the area.

Some workshop participants felt that the budgeting process should evolve away from its narrow, programmatic focus on "desired outcomes." However, others commented that although funding is

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dictated by outcome, a collaborative approach is sometimes the best way to achieve the desired outcomes.

Many workshop participants felt a caveat is necessary: Partnerships should be driven by the issues and not just by financial incentives. There was some caution expressed about partnerships being created solely because there is money. Instead, the funding should follow after a need is identified by the partnership.

Finally, there needs to be a review of current rewards and incentive programs to ensure that they encourage and reward collaborative work.

Time Allocations

There needs to be an explicit acknowledgement that partnership work is legitimate through the creation of a place for it in time allocations. As one participant said: "I spend a lot of time on collaborative efforts, but I have no place to code my time."

Additionally, BLM employees need to be given credit for work done on state and private lands, particularly if this work has been identified through a collaborative process and if such work promotes the health of the land. To accomplish this, the agency may have to seek expanded authority to expend appropriated funds on work related to state and private lands.

4 TOOLS AND ASSISTANCE

Shrinking budgets, reduced personnel, and the increased workload of labor-intensive collaborative efforts call for a variety of resource-sharing tools. These tools include assistance agreements with organizations that can help the BLM form partnerships, conduct monitoring, and develop community-based collaboration between the agency and its partners. Some specific ideas are:

- Use "how-to" workbooks to help the BLM and its partners understand economic and ecological conditions;
- Participate in training programs, such as the Partnership Series, to learn collaborative approaches;
- Circulate model agreements that have been developed with county governments;
- Develop certification programs for ecological monitoring by non-governmental entities;
- Share lessons learned from various collaborative efforts;
- Develop curricula for high-school students and involve schools and youth programs in collaborative efforts;
- Make use of assistance agreements with non-governmental organizations that can assist the BLM and its partners to implement on-the-ground collaborative work;
- Develop and circulate an e-mail list of people involved in collaborative efforts to facilitate information exchange;
- Develop a Web site voted to collaborative, community-based planning and stewardship.

Conclusions

"The long-term protection and use of the public lands is everyone's responsibility. The BLM cannot achieve this without the full participation and commitment of the American public."

– Anne Aldrich, group manager, Planning, Assessment, and Community Support

The benefits of collaboration include increased trust; improved working relationships with a variety of individuals, groups, and communities; the leveraging of scarce resources; improved management practices; and a sense of shared ownership and responsibility for the health of the land. The collaborative, community-based efforts of BLM and its partners are well underway, and have already led to improved land management practices that make the most of people's passions for their community and landscape, while at the same time adhering to national standards and laws.

From these efforts we have learned important lessons:

- Be open, inclusive, and communicate widely;
- Stay flexible and adapt to unique situations;
- Take risks, but sell your effort internally;
- Recognize the limitations of a collaborative approach;
- Work at the right scale;
- Set the legal sideboards early on in the process;
- Become an active member in your own community; and
- Have fun.

The BLM is at the forefront of this innovative approach to land management. We can all benefit by communicating each other's successes and challenges. This *Desktop Reference Guide* reports the good work already underway and creates a network of individuals with practical knowledge of collaborative approaches to planning and stewardship.

Listed below are the people who participated in the workshop and contributed to this *Desktop Reference Guide*. They are part of the growing network of BLM personnel who can be contacted for advice on collaborative approaches.

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ADDITIONAL REVIEWERS

The following individuals were unable to attend the workshop, but, because of their expertise in this field, were asked to review drafts of this *Desktop Reference Guide*. Their contributions added significantly to the quality of this resource. They also may be contacted for information and advice on collaborative, community-based planning.

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About the Bureau of Land Management:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), an agency within the U.S. Department of the Interior, administers 264 million acres of America's public lands, located primarily in the twelve western states. The BLM sustains the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

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About the Sonoran Institute:

The Sonoran Institute (SI) is a nonprofit organization that works with communities to conserve and restore important natural landscapes, including the wildlife and cultural values of these lands, in western North America. The Institute is pioneering a new approach to conservation called *community stewardship*, which involves working collaboratively with local people and other interests to advance conservation objectives, engaging partners such as landowners, governments, local leaders, and nongovernmental organizations. This report is part of a long-term cooperative effort between the BLM and SI to build capacity within the agency and communities adjoining public lands to effectively participate in collaborative, community-based planning.

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"The long-term protection and use of the public lands is everyone's responsibility. The BLM cannot achieve this without the full participation and commitment of the American public."

– Ann Aldrich, group manager, Planning, Assessment, and Community Support